

The House of General Alexander Macomb, U.S.A.
125 Main Street
Belleville
Essex County, New Jersey

HABS-NJ-390

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

HABS
N. J.7-Belleville
5-

The House of General Alexander Macomb, U.S.A.
125 Main Street
Belleville
Essex County, New Jersey

Owner: Mrs. Rosalie A. Clark, 52 Smith Street, Belleville

Date of Erection: 1798-1799. Frame addition to south end and
window sash replaced about 1870

Architect: Unknown

Builder: Sarah Macomb (original owner, 1798-1821)*

Present Condition: Demolished in March, 1940 on account of
tax burden

Number of Storeys: Two and one-half over basement

Materials of Construction

Foundation: Stone masonry

Exterior walls: Coursed ashlar brownstone to eaveline;
frame gable ends above that line

Interior walls: Lath and plaster on frame studding; wood
trim not original

Chimneys: Brick, built into inside of gable end walls

Roof: Gambrel, tin covered

Windows: Remarkable for being a seven-bay front. Present
sash replace originals.

Historical Data:

An account of this mansion house, illustrated with a photograph, appearing in The Sunday Call, Newark, New Jersey, of 1st September 1901, is here quoted and annotated by way of correction and explanation.

* A stone inscribed A. M. 1799 was noted at top of front wall by present owner at time of demolition. A picture post card in collection of Newark Public Library bears caption "Colonial Mansion built 1799 by Gen. McComb, Belleville, New Jersey" and shows a front view of the house here surveyed. But note that Gen. Alexander Macomb was only 17 years old in 1799 and that no house built in the U. S. after the Rev. War can be properly called "Colonial."

(Quote) Old Stone House, Belleville. Collector A. H. Osborne's house, a landmark of Belleville, is said to have been erected in Revolutionary times. The earliest record is a mortgage (a). This property was purchased some years prior to 1784 by Josiah Hornblower from William Barrett, High Sheriff of Essex County, under foreclosure. The records of sale are at Perth Amboy (b). In a deed dated 20 June 1803 (c), Josiah Hornblower and wife Elizabeth conveyed to Sarah

(a) Mortgage dated 11 June 1784, Josiah Hornblower of Second River, Essex County, New Jersey, to John Van Mouten, Jr. of Bergen County, from William Barrett, High Sheriff, bounded east by Passaic River and Episcopal Church lot, south by said lot, lands of Stephen Van Courtland and of mortgagor and by Second River, west by land of Winn, north by that of said Van Courtland, of Maxwell, said Hornblower and of Capt. Edmund Leslie, to secure payment of 300 Pounds in Spanish milled dollars at 8 shillings each and interest on 18 May 1785. (Essex County Mortg. Bk. B, p. 45). For full account of Josiah Hornblower (1729-1809) member of U. S. Congress, see Proceedings of N. J. Hist. Soc. 2nd series, VII, 175-247.

(b) More likely the deed of sale was recorded in Essex County Deed Book A, which has since been destroyed, unfortunately for our search of title to determine the ownership of this tract previous to 1784.

(c) Actually, this deed was recorded (in Essex County Deed Book H, p. 28) on this date; it was executed on 28 September 1798 by Josiah Hornblower and wife Elizabeth of Belleville, Newark Township, Essex County, conveying to Sarah Macomb of New York City, for \$4550, a 20 acre tract in the village of Belleville, having a 345 foot frontage on the west side of Main Street and 2655 feet on the north side of "the new road from Newtown to Belleville", with a 1/3 acre lot across Main Street and fronting on Passaic River, "with all and singular the houses, edifices, buildings, orchards" etc. By a deed of 20 April 1801, Hornblower and wife conveyed to said Sarah Macomb another lot on Passaic River in the village of Belleville "in front of the house and land whereon the said Sarah Macomb now lives."

Elizabeth conveyed to Sarah Macomb (d), wife of General Macomb (sic!) a portion of that tract which embraced all land west from Main Street to the line of present Clinton Street and north from present William Street to land of John Dow near present John Street. The Macomb family occupied the house (e) until 1811 when it was leased to one Winner who operated it as a tavern until 1816 when the owner took pos-

(d) This grantee Sarah Macomb of New York City 1798 as in note (a) could not have been wife of General Alexander Macomb as stated; he was but 16 years old in that year. She was evidently his aunt who became his mother-in-law in 1803. In a deed of 28 May 1803 conveying land to the M. E. Church in Belleville, the southern boundry is described as being "the widow Macomb's land". By a Power of Attorney dated 9 September 1815, Sarah Macomb of Bloomfield Township appointed John Dow of Belleville to lease or sell her real estate, describing it as including "A Dwelling House with about twenty-three acres of land in the village of Belleville, bounded east by Passaic River, south by the main road from Belleville to Bloomfield," a tract of wood and cleared land detached from that lot, and two dwelling houses and lots on the south side of the said road. (Essex County Deeds L2-536). Thirteen Essex County Deeds dated from 30 May 1820 to 20 May 1824, disposing of her property in Belleville, describe her as "Sarah Macomb late of Belleville", indicating her removal to another place, unnamed.

(e) Evidently, the widow Sarah Macomb and her family resided there in Belleville 1799-1815 as the property deeds indicate, and her nephew Alexander Macomb (1782-1841) probably lived with her while attending the Newark Academy. After his marriage to her daughter Catharine in 1803, (in the record of which both parties are described as of Belleville), he apparently continued his home with her there. Although the title to the property remained in Sarah Macomb, the house is here named for her famous son-in-law. His father, Alexander Macomb, is described in the 1790 census of N.Y.C. as head of a family of 5 males over 16, 6 males under 16, 12 females and 12 slaves. He was of N. Y. C. in 1792 as described in a deed conveying to one Daniel McCormick a 49a. tract on the south side of Second River, Belleville with other land.

session and resided there privately. (f) One Richard Gomez (sic) purchased and occupied it until 1830 (g) when it was rented to a Miss Dorkus Fulinger, a widow (sic,) who previously kept tavern near the site of the car stables in Belleville Avenue, Newark, and operated it as a tavern. The garden was enclosed with a tall round picket fence with arched gates at either end. A broad semi-circular carriage way, lined on either side with handsome trees, led to the entrance to the taver. The bar or taproom was situated at the left of the stoop, where the two windows are shown in the picture....The widow ran the place until 1835 (sic) when the property was purchased by Solomon I. Isaacs (g) son-in-law of Harmon Hendricks, owner of the Sono Copper Works. A year later, Mr. Isaacs and John Dow, who owned the adjoining property, opened up the lands by cutting through Stephens, Courtland, Isaac and Elizabeth Streets, Washington Avenue, Washington, Dow and Clinton Streets, and sold a portion of the tract in blocks upon which small frame houses were erected for the accomodation of workmen employed in the Belleville

(f) Alexander Macomb, Major General, U.S. Army, military hero of the Battle of Plattsburg, N.Y., was educated at the Academy in Newark, N.J., b. 3 Apr. 1782 at Detroit, Mich., d. 25 June 1841 at Washington, D.C., monument in Congressional Cemetery there, was 3rd of the 4 sons of Alexander Macomb, a wealthy fur merchant of Detroit and N.Y.C., by his wife Mary Catherine Navarre of Detroit, married (1st) 18 July 1803* Catherine Macomb, b. 30 Oct. 1787 at Detroit, d. 19 Sept. 1822 at Georgetown, D. C., dau. of William Macomb and wife Sarah Dring (q.v. in note d.) and had issue: Robert K. b. 15 May 1804, Belleville, N.J.; Catherine b. 1st October 1805, there; Alexander C. b. 1st Oct. 1808 there; Czarina C. b. 21 Oct. 1810 at Fort Johnson, S.C.; Anna M. b. 28 Oct. 1812 at Belleville; Alexander S. b. 3 June 1814 there; Octavia E. b. 11 Mar. 1816 at Detroit; Francis A. b. 29 Nov. 1817 there; William H. b. 16 June 1819 there; Sarah b. 26 Mar. 1821 there; and Jane O. b. 17 Sept. 1822 at Georgetown, D.C. (C. Denissen, Descendants of Robert Navarre, 1897, pp. 13, 241 and 245). *Essex County, N.J., Marriage records: -Capt. Alexander Macomb Jun. to Miss Catharine McComb, both of Belleville, 18 July 1803, by the Rev. Uzal Ogden of Newark (Genealog. Mag. N.J., IX, III). For an account of this Alexander Macomb, commanding general, of the U.S. Army, see Dictionary of American Biography XII, 156. (1933); and B.J. Lossing, The Pictorial Field-Book of the War of 1812, pp. 877-8, publ. 1863, which latter says, inter al., "when he returned to his family at Belleville, N.J., the village was illuminated, and he was received with the most gratifying tokens of respect."

(g) On the contrary, by deed of 26 June 1821, Sarah Macomb late of Bloomfield Twp., Essex Co., N.J., conveyed to Henry Shell of N.Y.C. for \$5500 the same 21 acre lot in Belleville which she had purchased from Josiah Hornblower by deed of 25 Sept. 1798 cited in note (e), and said Shell and wife Delia of Belleville conveyed it by deed of 1 Mar. 1827 to Solomon I. Isaacs of same place for \$6750. (Essex Co. Deed Books L2-557 and V2-302).

Print Works, a thriving industry. The property changed hands (h) and many changes were made. A few years ago it was acquired by an insurance concern, occupied at one time as a clubhouse of the Belleville Wheelmen and later vacated. Some years ago the property, which had become somewhat rundown, was purchased by Mr. Osborne who spent considerable money renovating the place. The house was again put into first class condition and the grounds beautified and today there is no prettier piece of property in Belleville. (End quote)

The house having been demolished in March 1940, our survey drawings made from measurements taken in 1935, comprise the only known record of this mansion whose forgotten fame is here restored in writing.

Reference:

A search of land and probate records of Essex County by James Hanlon, E.A.B.S. abstractor, received 30 November 1940.

(h) Deed 14 January 1832, Solomon I. Isaacs to Grace and Hannah Isaacs, all of N.Y.C., the house and a lot 291 feet on west side of Passaic Street (Main Street) by 421 ft. deep to Cortland Street. The Misses Isaacs of N.Y.C. to Wm Stephens of Bloomfield Twp., Essex Co., by deed 3 April 1833 for same property. Stephens to Thos. B. Coddington, N.Y.C., the eastern half of same as one of 10 tracts, by deed 20 March 1860. Coddington to Mary G. Condit of Harrison, Hudson Co., N.J., the same lot "Known as the residence of William Stephens", by deed of 21 November 1860. Condit to Hugh Holmes of Belleville Township, Essex County, by deed of 15 June 1867. Holmes to Samuel B. Brittain of Newark, N.J., by deed of 22 May 1868. Brittain to Holmes by deed of 17 March 1869. Holmes to The Mutual Life Ins. Company of N.Y. by mortgage 20 November 1871, foreclosed and propty. conveyed by sheriff to Mortgagee by deed 10 Oct. 1876. The Mutual Company to Arthur H. Osborne of Belleville by deed 1 Apr. 1897. Osborne to Arthur E. Sandford of Newark 9 August 1912. Sanford of Newark to Chas. W. Dickinson of Belleville 10 March 1914 in trust. Dickinson to Emil C. Mertz of Belleville 6 April 1914 by mortgage, foreclosed and property seized and conveyed by sheriff to Mary E. Mertz 15 December 1917. Mertz and husband to Joseph F. Plainfield of Newark by deed 20 October 1920. Plainfield to Giuseppe Luriano by deed 22 March 1921. Heirs of Luriano to Louis Ruberto of Belleville 3 March 1930. Ruberto to Amato Building Company of Newark, 13 August 1932. Amato Company to Mary L. O'Neill of Newark 10 August 1933. O'Neill by will to niece Rosalie A. Clark, 22 July 1935. At the time of our survey in 1935, the house was occupied by tenants.

Lewis D. Cook

Supervising Historian

2 April 1941

Approved:

Seymour Williams

SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, F.A.I.A.
District Officer